

# Kentucky Teacher

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News for the Nation's Most Innovative Educators

www.education.ky.gov



## District audits yield valuable data

By Faun S. Fishback

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Voluntary district scholastic audits conducted in five school districts late last year are providing data to back up a long-held supposition: Without district support and leadership, Kentucky schools face a more difficult time getting to proficiency. The audits' findings emphasize the important role of district support for school improvement.

The five districts participating in the voluntary audits are Breckinridge County, Fayette County, Fleming County, Trigg County

and Woodford County. All are progressing districts with index scores for the 2002-2003 Commonwealth Accountability Testing System between 68.7 points and 77.5 points.

An evaluation team of educators, parents and business leaders from outside each audited district took a close look at academic performance, learning environment and efficiency. Each team used "Kentucky's Standards and Indicators for School Improvement" (SISI) developed by the Kentucky Department of Education for district audits.

While the audits conducted in 2003 were voluntary, mandatory district audits begin by state law with the release of test scores in the fall of 2004. Any district with a school that has been classified as a Level 3 school for two consecutive testing cycles will be audited.

Testing the SISI tool with the volunteer districts provided valuable information to the districts about their practices and helped the department refine the process and tools for use at the district level, said Pat Hurt, director of the department's Division of School

Improvement.

The department has been using the "Standards and Indicators for School Improvement" (SISI) for school-level scholastic audits and reviews for three years. During that time, the department has found 27 indicators that differentiate high-performing schools from low-performing schools. Those 27 "variance points" are helping to inform school improvement efforts among a large group of Kentucky schools, Hurt said.

"The benefit of having people from outside the district to assess how your district is

performing is a great opportunity," said Breckinridge County Superintendent Wayne Puckett. "It provides another perception as well as recommendations for improvement."

Lisa Stone, director of student achievement for Fayette County Schools, said that district participated in the audit looking for "meaningful data to guide us as we plan and implement strategies to increase student achievement." The district also looked to the process to provide information to an incoming superintendent, she added.

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Photo by Rick McComb

### A walk in the sun

Kalynn Parnam gets a preview of spring on a sunny winter day as she makes her way to class through a glass-enclosed walkway at Owensboro (Independent) Middle School. She is among approximately 472,000 Kentucky public school students who will participate in the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) assessments April 26 through May 21.

## T.C. Cherry on top for high performance

By Joy Barr

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Drive down Liberty Avenue in Bowling Green and you're soon made aware by congratulatory signs, banners and blue ribbons that T.C. Cherry Elementary is a No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Blue Ribbon School. Walk in the front door of the school and you immediately see hallways filled with colorful examples of the good work going on there.

The school is filled with a sense of pride for its accomplishments. The building displays the efforts made by everyone in this Bowling Green Independent school to be a state and nationally recognized high-performing school.

T.C. Cherry is one of only 240 of the nation's 150,000 public and private schools to receive the NCLB Blue Ribbon award in 2003. It is the only

public school in Kentucky to receive the designation. Three Kentucky parochial schools also received the Blue Ribbon designation in 2003.

"The NCLB Blue Ribbon Schools program recognizes schools that produce results for ALL of their students regardless of race, socioeconomic status or zip code," stated U.S. Secretary

See **T.C. CHERRY** on Page 9

## State board discusses student health and character education programs

By Lisa Y. Gross

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At its February meeting, the Kentucky Board of Education heard presentations and had in-depth discussions on a number of items, including character education, the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) and coordinated school health issues.

Representatives of the Pulaski and Calloway counties' schools told the board about character education programs in their districts. Pulaski County Schools implements a locally designed character education program that involves students, staff and the community. In a school-business partnership, the Pella Foundation provides funding

for Calloway County Schools to implement the Character Counts program. Murray Independent Schools will participate in the partnership later this year.

Staff from the Kentucky Department of Education also presented information about other character education programs in the state. They discussed the connections between these programs and community education, family resource/youth services centers and other programs.

The full board attended a portion of its Management Committee's meeting to hear a discussion of Coordinated School Health efforts. Department staff presented information on school

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# Bulletin Board



## Events

### Writing Project

The Bluegrass Writing Project is accepting applications from teachers interested in participating in the 18th annual Summer Institute of the Bluegrass Writing Project. The institute will be June 14 through July 9 at the Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning in Lexington.

Educators from primary through university level (P-16) with an interest in improving writing instruction and integrating writing across the curriculum should apply. Participants receive an \$800 stipend and six hours of University of Kentucky graduate credit, tuition-free (in-state tuition only). Twenty P-16 teachers will be selected. Application deadline is March 5.

[www.bgwp.org](http://www.bgwp.org)

Contact: Elizabeth Spalding, (859) 257-4127; emspal0@uky.edu

### Thoughtful Classroom

Knox County Schools is sponsoring a workshop, The Thoughtful Classroom Institute, July 13 and 14 at Lynn Camp High School in Corbin. The institute explores research-based strategies for effective and differentiated learning. Robert Marzano, Harvey Silver, Richard Strong and Joyce Jackson are the featured presenters. Twelve hours of leadership/professional development credit are available for Kentucky educators.

[www.thethoughtfulclassroom.com](http://www.thethoughtfulclassroom.com)

### Arts showcases

The Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts will host artists and exhibitors from across the United States at its annual Arts Education Showcases around the state. The one-day events, held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., will familiarize Kentucky educators with performing artists, visual artists, arts organizations and cultural institutions that are available as resources for their schools.

Showcases are scheduled for these locations:

- Louisville, March 3
- Bowling Green, March 9
- Madisonville, March 10
- Lexington, March 16
- Whitesburg, March 17
- Crestview Hills, March 18
- Ashland, March 19

[www.kentuckycenter.org/education](http://www.kentuckycenter.org/education)

[/artseducation.asp](http://artseducation.asp)

Contact: David Holland, (502) 562-0157; dholland@kentuckycenter.org

### Teacher appreciation

National Teacher Day will be celebrated May 4, during National Teacher Appreciation Week, May 3-7.

[www.pta.org/programs/tchappwk.htm](http://www.pta.org/programs/tchappwk.htm)

## ‘We the People’

This year’s “We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution” summer institutes are scheduled by grade level:

Elementary teachers — July 12

Middle school teachers — July 13

High school teachers — July 14

The annual program is a national scholastic program for teaching students about the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. School teams may compete in annual mock congressional hearings.

Contact: Rachel Bingham, (800) 928-2350; rachelb@mail.aoc.state.ky.us

## Bike race

Bowling Green High School’s Mountain Bike Club will host the Kentucky State Championship Mountain Bike Race for middle and high school students, Saturday, March 27, at the Park Mammoth Resort in Park City. Information about the event and how to start a cycling club in your school is on the club’s Web site.

<http://bghsmtbclub.topcities.com>

Contact: Jeremy Tucker, (270) 746-2300; jtucker@b-g.k12.ky.us

## Stage One

Stage One in Louisville is gearing up for “The Great Gilly Hopkins,” a musical based on Katherine Paterson’s novel that teaches valuable lessons about friendship, family and forgiveness. School performances for grades 4-10 will be March 8-26. Teacher materials are available. All performances are in the Kentucky Center Bomhard Theatre.

[www.stageone.org](http://www.stageone.org)

Contact: Box office, (800) 989-5946

## Children’s Theatre

Lexington Children’s Theatre presents “The Wind in the Willows,” based on the book by Kenneth Grahame and adapted by Moses Goldberg. The classic is offered for school groups March 1, 2, 3, 9, 10 and 11 at 10 a.m. and 11:45 a.m.; tickets are \$5 each for school groups.

[www.lctonstage.org](http://www.lctonstage.org)

Contact: Box office, (859) 254-4546

## Conferences

### Energy education

“Energy & Education: Making the Connection” will be presented June 14-18 by the Kentucky NEED Project, an affiliate of the National Energy Education Development Project. During the free conference, K-12 teachers will tour Eastern Kentucky energy sites and receive classroom curriculum connecting energy to the classroom. To request a brochure and registration, e-mail Kreagor@need.org or call toll free (866) 736-8941.

## Safe schools

Those who are interested in presenting at the annual Kentucky safe schools conference, scheduled for Sept. 27-28 in Louisville, must submit their proposals by April 23. Proposals should emphasize the connection between school safety, student discipline and a range of positive student outcomes such as reduced dropout rates, improved attendance and higher levels of academic achievement.

Contact: Kerri Schelling, (800) 372-2962; kschelling@ksba.org

## Resources

### Heritage grants

Heritage Education Grants from the Kentucky Historical Society are available to schools in Kentucky for projects and field trips that benefit K-12 students. A maximum of \$250 is available per grant for field trips that will provide students the opportunity to learn and explore the history and heritage of their communities. A maximum of \$500 is available per grant for history-related classroom projects.

[http://history.ky.gov/Teachers/Heritage\\_Education.htm](http://history.ky.gov/Teachers/Heritage_Education.htm)

Contact: Kate Hesseldenz, (502) 564-1792; kate.hesseldenz@ky.gov

### Inspirational teachers

ING Financial Services provides funds for K-12 teachers through its Unsung Heroes Awards. One hundred educators receive \$2,000 each for pioneering new methods and techniques that improve student learning. Awards are made payable jointly to the recipient and to the school. Application deadline is April 30.

[www.ing-usa.com/us/about/connect/education/unsung\\_heroes.html](http://www.ing-usa.com/us/about/connect/education/unsung_heroes.html)

### Kids Voting

Kids Voting USA, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, offers sample curriculum, classroom activities and links to other civics resources on its Web site that teachers and parents can use to enhance civics education and provide young people with an authentic voting experience. Educators can learn more about starting a local Kids Voting chapter by contacting Mark Neikirk, Kids Voting Kentucky board chair, at mneikirk@cincypost.com.

[www.kidsvotingusa.org/teachers/teacher.asp](http://www.kidsvotingusa.org/teachers/teacher.asp)

Bulletin Board is compiled by Joy Barr  
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# Commissioner's Comments

## State board addresses tough budget times

By Gene Wilhoit, Commissioner  
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The Kentucky Board of Education went on record at its February meeting as reaffirming its support for sufficient funding of public education in Kentucky. The board's budget requests to Gov. Ernie Fletcher proposed protecting Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) funds for schools and making modest, but necessary increases to adequately fund programs and services that directly impact teaching and learning in the classroom.

The board felt compelled to reiterate the need for sufficient funding for schools in light of the serious financial problems facing Kentucky. As you know, the education budget for the remainder of the current fiscal year was reduced again in December by 2.5 percent.

At this writing, the governor's budget is being closely scrutinized by House of Representatives' committees before being sent to the Senate. We remain uncertain about what allocations the legislature's final budget will contain for public schools.

In its statement, the board acknowledges the complexities and challenges the governor and state lawmakers face in preparing a balanced budget as required by the constitution. However, the board is asking that the budget not be balanced at the expense of the progress schools have made in educating our young people during the past 13 years.

Instead, the 11-member board is calling on the governor and legislature to "enact tax modernization measures that will ensure the streams of revenue will grow as Kentucky's needs grow over time."

The board's statement said, in part, "...sufficient funding of the P-12 system is absolutely essential to provide each child the opportunity to achieve at high levels as required by statute.

"The Kentucky Board of Education is gravely concerned about the potential for further reductions in spending for services and programs that support student learning. Such cuts, if implemented, will greatly

reduce the capacity of educators and students to reach the goals our nation and state have set for them."

Funding losses would make it harder for our schools to meet the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS). Even when no cuts are made to programs, the lack of additional growth money signals future problems.

Although we rarely mention the

effects of cuts here in the department, we are not untouched by the budget process. Over the past three years, the department has experienced funding decreases that drop us well below the state and federal standards for program administration. We are operating with 30 percent less funding and 165 fewer employees than in 2001.

The state board's call for sufficient funding for public schools is not a "cry in the wilderness." As I write this column,

representatives of 150 public school districts are in Frankfort rallying on the Capitol steps and talking earnestly with state lawmakers about education budget issues.

In a recent Bluegrass Poll, conducted by The Courier-Journal, 70 percent of those responding said public school and Medicare funds should not be cut. There truly is support at all levels for providing sufficient funds to our education system — and the state board will keep that support on the minds of members of the legislature as they move forward on the state's budget for 2005-2006.

To comment on this topic, send e-mail to the commissioner at gwilhoit@kde.state.ky.us.



Photo by Rick McComb

### Seeing eye to eye

Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit joins T.C. Cherry Elementary students on the floor to find out why they think their school is a No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon School. The students told the commissioner what they are learning and what they like about the Bowling Green Independent school prior to an assembly celebrating the school's national recognition.

### Changed your address?

*Kentucky Teacher* receives mailing addresses for all Kentucky certified classroom teachers and administrators from the Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System. If you are currently employed by a Kentucky school, you can change your address in one of two ways:

- by completing a change of address form that can be downloaded from the retirement system's Web site at [www.ktrs.org/ktrsresources/MEMinfo/chgaddrnew.htm](http://www.ktrs.org/ktrsresources/MEMinfo/chgaddrnew.htm)
- by submitting a written request that includes your old address, new address and your social security number

Mail the form or your own written request to:  
Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System  
Attn: Tammy Brown  
479 Versailles Rd.  
Frankfort, KY 40601  
If you are not a current teacher or administrator, e-mail your change of address to [kyteacher@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:kyteacher@kde.state.ky.us) or send your change of address information in writing to:

*Kentucky Teacher*  
1914 Capital Plaza Tower  
500 Mero St.  
Frankfort, KY 40601



# Student technology standards can help everyone succeed

Kentucky's education system has long been recognized as a national leader in education technology, as Kentucky students learn many computer skills throughout their education careers. In the past, however, there's been little attempt to formalize state-wide standards by which student proficiency with technology can be assessed. Some districts have student technology standards, others do not.

That's about to change with the recent Kentucky Board of Education endorsement of the National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) for Students as Kentucky's educational student technology standards. The board is calling for all schools and districts to use the six categories of technology mastery, published by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), as guidelines for planning technology-based core content lessons.

"These categories represent process-based standards that can be applied to the use of any technology tool, whether the tool is a pencil or a computer or technology yet to evolve," said Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit in a letter to superintendents. "By approaching educational technology via these six categories, students will be able to efficiently, responsibly and appropriately use technology to access, process, manage and communicate information locally as well as globally."

The six categories for the student standards are basic operations and concepts; social, ethical and human issues; technology productivity tools; technology communications tools; technology research tools, and technology problem-solving and decision making tools.

Scott County school technology coordinators and teachers representing grades K-12 worked collaboratively in 1999 to develop an aligned framework of student technology standards. Together they translated those standards

into expectations for students at each grade level, including examples and Web sites.

Teachers use the standards to design effective and engaging lessons for students that allow them to demonstrate both content knowledge and technology skills, said Jeanne Biddle, the district's instructional resource teacher. Those standards meet the six NETS standards (See chart).

"We always encourage teachers to embed technology into core content, and not to view it as an add-on," Biddle said. "A teacher's rubric may be created to score both content and technology as a whole or the rubric may be designed to score content and technology independently."

The Kentucky Department of Education currently is planning professional development to help teachers design strategies for implementation of the student standards, set benchmarks for student proficiency and create skill sets for content areas.

In Scott County, Biddle said, the student technology standards have positive effects on everyone. "Implementing NETS throughout our district has increased teacher and administrator awareness of what students need to know to become proficient users of technology to meet 21st century skills," she said. "The results demonstrate student proficiency of technology and content, which will prepare them for the classroom and the world of work."

For more information about student technology standards, go to the department's Web site at [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov) and enter "student technology standards" in the keyword/search box and click. Biddle also recommends the ISTE Web site, [www.iste.org](http://www.iste.org), for teacher, administrator and student resources.

## *National Education Technology Standards (NETS)*

### **Basic operations and concepts**

- Students demonstrate a sound understanding of the nature and operation of technology systems.
- Students are proficient in the use of technology.

### **Social, ethical and human issues**

- Students understand these issues related to technology.
- Students practice responsible use of technology systems, information and software.
- Students develop positive attitudes toward technology uses that support lifelong learning collaboration, personal pursuits and productivity.

### **Technology productivity tools**

- Students use technology tools to enhance learning, increase productivity and promote creativity.
- Students use productivity tools to collaborate in constructing technology-enhanced models, prepare publications and produce other creative works.

### **Technology communications tools**

- Students use telecommunications to collaborate, publish and interact with peers, experts and other audiences.
- Students use a variety of media and formats to communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences.

### **Technology research tools**

- Students use technology to locate, evaluate and collect information from a variety of sources.
- Students use technology tools to process data and report results.
- Students evaluate and select new information resources and technological innovations based on the appropriateness for specific tasks.

### **Technology problem-solving and decision making tools**

- Students use technology resources for solving problems and making informed decisions.
- Students employ technology in the development of strategies for solving problems in the real world.

## *Resources abound to celebrate Earth Day in April*

Teachers can find many ways to involve their students in the national celebration of Earth Day, April 22.

### **Celebrate with AWAKE**

Help your students become Wild about Reading and Writing on Earth Day and, in the process, learn about Kentucky's environment. The All Wild About Kentucky's Environment (AWAKE) partners are sponsoring an Earth Day celebration to encourage Kentuckians to read nature writing. Earth Day is marked during Earth Week, April 18 – 24.

To become involved, visit the AWAKE Web site ([www.kentuckyawake.org](http://www.kentuckyawake.org)) and click on Wild About Reading and Writing at the top of the page or the Earth Day icon near the bottom of the page. Select a book from the drop-down menu and register to be a reader in your county. You and your class also can suggest the addition of your favorite nature or environment-related books to the list.

Once you and your class read a selection, your students can submit book reviews for posting on the AWAKE Web site.

Another way to become involved is to visit the Salato Wildlife Education Center in Frankfort during Earth

Week. Scheduled programs will include readings related to wildlife and the environment.

Of course, Earth Week or Earth Day are not the only times to visit the AWAKE Web site and its core content connections. Throughout the year, Wild About Reading and Writing offers nature-related reading suggestions and book reviews from educators and students. You'll also find nature-related writing from teachers and students.

For more information about AWAKE, contact Stephanie Jenkins at [swjenk2@uky.edu](mailto:swjenk2@uky.edu) or Venita Bright at [venita.bright@ky.gov](mailto:venita.bright@ky.gov).

### **Celebrate the environment**

State government agencies are helping schools celebrate Earth Day in Kentucky. The state Earth Day Web site ([www.environment.ky.gov/earthday](http://www.environment.ky.gov/earthday)) lists activities that teachers and students can participate in throughout April or during Earth Week.

In addition to educational activities, teachers can

help students develop creative ideas for making their schools more environmentally friendly. Examples include making no-cost/low-cost modifications to the school's energy system; designing, expanding or maintaining outdoor classrooms, and launching or expanding a recycling program.

The Web site also includes tips for participating in Earth Day in the home, yard, neighborhood and community. A calendar on this Web site contains information about events in many communities.

Teachers also are encouraged to visit the Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet's environmental education and outreach Web site throughout the year. Here, teachers will find units of study, professional development opportunities, and special events and programs for students and teachers. Be sure to bookmark [www.environment.ky.gov/education](http://www.environment.ky.gov/education) as updates to the site are frequent.

Can't find what you need? Contact Kate Shanks, the cabinet's environmental education coordinator, (502) 564-7760; [kate.shanks@ky.gov](mailto:kate.shanks@ky.gov).





## Marco Polo resources aligned to Kentucky content

Marco Polo has come to mean more to Kentucky teachers over the past six years than the name of a famous explorer or a children's game. More than 7,000 Kentucky teachers know Marco Polo as the Internet site that provides free, online, quality, research-based, standards-based classroom materials.

Since February, Kentucky teachers have been adding another adjective to describe the lessons and professional development offered via Marco Polo: Kentucky-aligned. Thanks to the work of content teachers from throughout the state, many of the lessons available on the Marco Polo site have been aligned to Kentucky's Program of Studies and Core Content for Assessment.

Teachers have two ways to reach the Kentucky-aligned lessons. Go to the Kentucky Department of Education's Web site ([www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov)) and enter "Marco Polo" in the keyword/search box or visit the Marco Polo Web site ([www.marcopolo-education.org](http://www.marcopolo-education.org)) and click on the "State Network" menu item, then select Kentucky from the list of states.

Aligned lessons in science, mathematics, social studies (including economics and geography), and arts and humanities are available. Aligned language arts materials will be available soon.

The number of aligned lessons will continue to grow as Kentucky teachers recommend additional Marco Polo lessons for the Kentucky repository.

Teachers who want to learn how to integrate technology and Marco Polo Internet content into teaching activities and classroom learning may choose face-to-face training or a self-paced online course. Simply make your request at [www.marcopolo-education.org/pd/logistics.aspx](http://www.marcopolo-education.org/pd/logistics.aspx).

Teachers interested in being a certified Marco Polo field trainer should contact Department of Education staff members Donna Eustace or Michael Dailey. If you have been a field trainer for the program, you are encouraged to register for recertification as a field



**Fairview (Independent) Elementary 5th graders Tyler Messer and Corey Moore conduct online research on the use of timber during America's colonial period. The Kentucky-aligned Marco Polo Web site will provide a new online resource to help teachers integrate technology and core content into teaching activities and classroom learning.**

trainer for Kentucky.

Field trainers for Kentucky should register all trainings at [http://rusticello.mped.org/ipds/ipds\\_login.asp](http://rusticello.mped.org/ipds/ipds_login.asp). This tool, provided by Marco Polo, maintains accurate, up-to-date, results-driven data of Kentucky educators' use of this resource.

For more information about becoming a trained Marco Polo educator, contact Donna Eustace, (502) 564-7168, [deustace@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:deustace@kde.state.ky.us) or Michael Dailey, (502) 564-4474, [mdailey@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:mdailey@kde.state.ky.us).

## A Kentucky middle school will win a new computer learning center

PLATO Learning Inc. again this year is sponsoring the William R. Roach grant that will award a technology center, valued at more than \$100,000, to a middle school.

The award was established last year in memory of the late founder of the computer-based learning company. PLATO awarded the first grant to a Minnesota school near its national headquarters. Kentucky, Roach's boyhood home, will be the second recipient state.

The award includes 20 computer workstations, a file

server, installation of hardware and software, four days of professional development, one year of technical support and auxiliary equipment.

The Kentucky Association of School Administrators (KASA) is helping coordinate the award. For complete program details, visit KASA's Web site at [www.kasa.org](http://www.kasa.org) or call the KASA office at (800) 928-KASA (5272).

Application deadline is March 31. The winning school will be notified by May and invited to KASA's conference July 21-23 in Louisville to receive the award.

## New arts grants available to schools

Many teachers throughout the commonwealth have yet to discover two of the Kentucky Arts Council's newer grant programs, according to John S. Benjamin, the council's Arts Education Program director.

"With all that our Kentucky teachers have on their plates, it's difficult to get the word to everyone about some of our special programs," Benjamin says. "Since our YCIP and ArtsStart! grants are relatively new and unfamiliar, they are my least competitive programs because we receive far fewer applications for them."

ArtsStart! and Youth Center Initiated Program (YCIP) are residency programs that place professional artists from all disciplines into early childhood education facilities, youth correctional facilities and alternative schools. Both grant programs are based on the council's popular Teacher Initiated Program.

ArtsStart! enables the director or staff of an early childcare/preschool facility to implement an artist residency. Professional artists can visit these facilities for 20 or 40 sessions to demonstrate their art forms and share their creativity.

ArtsStart! residencies may focus on any artistic discipline and must involve the children and directors and staff directly in the creative process. The residency must include a special event or activity that includes parental participation. For guidelines and application forms, visit [http://artscouncil.ky.gov/guide/prog6/ast\\_gdl.htm](http://artscouncil.ky.gov/guide/prog6/ast_gdl.htm) on the Web.

The fact that the arts can change lives and have been particularly effective with at-risk youth gave strong impetus to the development of YCIP, Benjamin said. This program enables correctional facilities and alternative schools to design and implement residencies through collaboration between their staff and teachers and practicing, professional artists.

Students in these facilities receive opportunities for alternative means of expression and experience different pathways to learning through the arts. Students are directly involved in the creative process with artists who make art as a profession. Guidelines and application forms may be found at [http://artscouncil.ky.gov/guide/prog6/ycip\\_gdl.htm](http://artscouncil.ky.gov/guide/prog6/ycip_gdl.htm) on the Web.

Neither YCIP nor ArtsStart! has a calendar deadline for applications. Instead, applications are due 30 or more days before the residency is to begin.

For more information on these and other Kentucky Arts Council education programs, visit [www.artscouncil.ky.gov](http://www.artscouncil.ky.gov) and click on Arts Education.



## Talk to Us!

*Kentucky Teacher* wants to know what you think, what you need from the Department of Education, what you want to see in future issues.

**E-mail:** [kyteacher@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:kyteacher@kde.state.ky.us) **Fax:** (502) 564-6470

**Phone:** (502) 564-3421 or  
(800) 533-5372  
(toll free in Kentucky)

**Write:** Kentucky Teacher  
1914 Capital Plaza Tower  
500 Mero St.  
Frankfort, KY 40601



# Read & Discuss

## ‘On Solid Ground: Strategies for Teaching Reading K-3’

Reviewed by Melissa Young  
Shelby County Schools

“On Solid Ground: Strategies for Teaching Reading K-3” by Sharon Taberski literally fell into my hands during my involvement in the Early Reading Incentive Grant that my school participated in from 2001–2003. After the grant leader listened to me endlessly discussing my goals for my students and myself as a teacher and the reading struggles I faced with upper primary students, she handed me the book at a monthly group meeting.

I wasn’t hesitant to read it. The wealth of information that I marked with more than 20 Post-it notes presented numerous ideas for change.

I highly recommend “On Solid Ground: Strategies for Teaching Reading K-3” to any teacher looking for ways to improve the atmosphere of the classroom, searching for new approaches to teaching struggling readers or seeking to establish a structured classroom that focuses on literacy. The book also provides insightful suggestions for assessing children’s reading abilities, examples of lesson plans for teaching reading strategies and ideas for using reading responses to further literacy skills.

I just happened to take the small changes Taberski writes about and went “above and beyond” to meet the needs of my students. As a result, I changed my classroom design and am watching my students thrive from the changes.

One of my yearly goals is to instill a passion for reading in my students. Students lack the passion and desire to learn how to read when they are struggling readers.

In Chapter 3 of Taberski’s book, she discusses creating a “purposeful environment.” My definition of that purposeful environment is a classroom that eliminates the fear of taking a risk. A purposeful classroom challenges each and every

student and provides them with a sense of belonging and security.

Taberski discusses the effectiveness of lowering one table in the classroom and allowing students to sit on pillows for reading groups or writing assignments. After reading the chapter, I envisioned a more open classroom where all tables were lowered and students used a carpet mat as their defining space.

In the primary classroom, there is constant movement. There is no need to have individual desks when students don’t sit at them for more than 90 minutes throughout the school day. I felt lowering all the tables in my room would help me meet these classroom goals:

- Eliminate the “messy desk” syndrome
- Eliminate students leaning back in chairs
- Define student work areas so that students have their own working space and are not interrupted by peers
- Provide easier ways to group the students throughout the day as needed

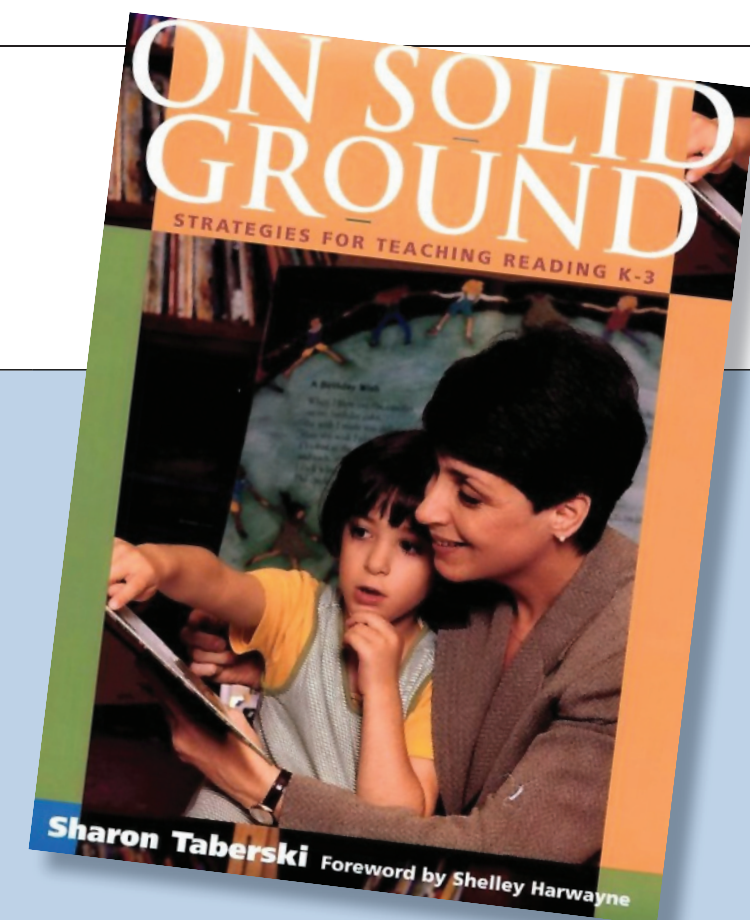
The lowered tables also allow me to work at the students’ level so

that instruction is student-centered. Do I really crawl around on the floor all day? Absolutely! I find it much easier than leaning over a student working at a desk.

I wedge myself in between students at the tables. They know that I am their assistant throughout the day to facilitate learning by providing the materials and structure they need. It’s their job to learn!

In comparing this school year to last, the atmosphere in our classroom has changed to a relaxed and inviting place to learn. Students feel like the room belongs to them. The tables are lowered for them, carpets define their spaces, and the arrangement and use of the tables are for them.

There were many kinks to work out. Since students have the freedom to choose where they sit each morning and afternoon, I had to devise an easy system for taking attendance. Secondly, without assigned seats I needed a simple way to hand out work to



By Sharon Taberski

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the students. Students store their work in a large pocket chart and get items from the chart or their cubby when needed. I also had to establish guidelines for the usage of the tables. Expectations of how to work at tables and behavior are

clearly defined to prevent disruptive behavior.

The relationship between my students and me has always been crucial to ensuring a risk-free classroom in which they can learn new skills, apply them daily, and master or apply those skills at a higher level.

The open classroom arrangement allows us to move freely without negotiating around chairs and desks. We pivot our bodies around on the floor to look at the word wall, reading strategies wall and charts hanging from the ceiling.

Our instructional relationship has been established on student terms. I move around on the floor working beside my students instead of calling them up to my desk and meeting with them at my discretion.

It takes a great deal of effort for teachers to make changes in the classroom and go beyond our comfort zone. However, I’ve found — just as Taberski predicted — the rewards can be above expectations.

(Melissa Young is a primary teacher at Wright Elementary in Shelby County.)



Teacher Melissa Young sits on one of the lowered tables in her primary classroom to give students instructions on measuring the weight of fruits and vegetables for a science experiment that observed weight loss due to evaporation.

Photo by Rick McComb



# Museum-schools partnership is making bluegrass music

By Cathy Lindsey

clindsey@kde.state.ky.us

If you're traveling anywhere near Owensboro, you're likely to hear guitars strummin', banjos pickin' and fiddles pluckin'. That's the sound of 5,387 area children studying and performing bluegrass music.

Owensboro is located 40 miles northwest of Rosine, home of the late Bill Monroe, who is best known as Father of Bluegrass. That proximity and a respect for the area's cultural legacy were incentives to get students in all 29 city, county and private elementary schools in the Owensboro-Daviess County area involved in the Bluegrass in the Schools program.

"I think it's really important for kids to learn about their cultural heritage," said Julie White, fine and performing arts specialist for Owensboro Public Schools. "Since bluegrass music comes from Kentucky, our kids are learning that they love this style of music that they didn't know anything about."

Greg Cahill originated the Bluegrass in the Schools program in conjunction with the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) in Nashville. The International Bluegrass Music Museum (IBMM), located in Owensboro, funds the program for the local schools.

The museum expanded the program by providing each elementary school with a mandolin, a fiddle, a guitar and a banjo. Music teachers get help from 75 volunteers recruited by the museum to implement this program. The museum also offers free instrument lessons to any interested teachers and students.

"We're doing this to entice students to play and learn about bluegrass music," said Gabrielle Gray, IBMM director. "If we start the children early, we're hoping they can better preserve its heritage."

Lesson plans aligned to Kentucky core content are available to teachers free of charge. "These plans address the elements of music as they apply to bluegrass music — rhythm, timbre, melody, form, dynamics, harmony and tempo — and combine all into a format that is easily accessible and enjoyable for elementary-age students. It also is easy to incorporate into a teach-

er's existing lesson plans," explained fine arts specialist White.

Sharon Weber, music teacher at the Owensboro 5-6 Elementary Center, appreciates the opportunity to use the program in her classes. "I've been teaching for 28 years, and this is the largest donation that's been made to my program," she said.

Initially, Weber was concerned about her ability to teach this pro-

bit of that knowledge to playing the guitar and banjo.

"I'm able to get professional development credit for all these lessons I'm taking, which applies directly to what I am doing in the classroom," said Weber. "It's so beneficial to me personally as well as to my teaching."

Students also are taking to the instruments. Besides learning the history and elements of bluegrass in music class, students at the 5-6 Center may take music lessons after school. Once a week, in six-week ses-

makes all the difference in the world. It gets them excited about music."

Music teachers have long believed that music education is essential to a child's overall education, and research shows that the study of music can increase brain development and improve a student's overall academic performance. Both Daviess County and Owensboro Independent schools are using music as a strategy to move students toward proficiency.

Besides the potential improvement of student performance, these students also are getting a lesson in cultural unity. According to White, there is immense community and school pride in participating in a bluegrass music program larger than any other in the nation. "Learning the history and how to play music that has its origins in this state provides an almost automatic cultural crossover into other areas of the curriculum, providing depth and context in other subjects," White explained.

Even setting aside all of the learning opportunities, it is obvious in Owensboro that music is just plain fun. Students of the 5-6 Center clapped along enthusiastically at a recent concert sponsored by the bluegrass museum. Over a two-week period, bluegrass-recording artists Valerie Smith and Liberty Pike performed a program written especially for the students in all 29 Owensboro-Daviess County area elementary schools.

"I tell the kids that this is a wonderful hobby," said Weber, the music teacher. "You never know when you might want to take a guitar lesson or sing in the church choir. All your life you're going to be around music."

Schools across the state soon can begin similar bluegrass music programs. The bluegrass museum will send interested schools sample lesson plans, a performance video and hints on how to find sponsors and get the best value on instruments.

Resources also are available through the IBMA at [www.ibma.org/events/programs/schools/index.asp](http://www.ibma.org/events/programs/schools/index.asp).

Contact: Gabrielle Gray, director of the IBMM, (270) 926-7891; [gabrielle.gray@bluegrass-museum.org](mailto:gabrielle.gray@bluegrass-museum.org) or Julie White, Owensboro Public Schools, (270) 686-1000; [jwhite@owensboro.k12.ky.us](mailto:jwhite@owensboro.k12.ky.us).

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*"These plans address the elements of music as they apply to bluegrass music — rhythm, timbre, melody, form, dynamics, harmony and tempo — and combine all into a format that is easily accessible and enjoyable for elementary-age students," said Julie White.*

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gram. Trained as a vocalist, she had little experience with bluegrass instruments. Her concerns were soon dismissed after the museum offered volunteers to give her individual instrument lessons or lessons with her class. She takes mandolin lessons at the museum and transfers a

sions, a local volunteer gives lessons on the mandolin, banjo and guitar. Students may continue lessons at the museum.

"Hands-on is always good," Weber said. "I could teach music theory from now until the end of time. But when students actually get their hands on the instruments and start hearing themselves produce the sound, it



Music teacher Sharon Weber shows J.D. Kessinger where to place his fingers on the banjo as Ben Withrow prepares to accompany him on the guitar.

Photo by Cathy Lindsey



# Morgan Elementary accepts no excuses

By Cathy Lindsey  
clindsey@kde.state.ky.us

As Kentucky makes plans to mark the 50th anniversary this May of the Supreme Court's decision on *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, the value of equity in education is a topic of discussion across the state. This landmark decision made possible equal learning opportunities and support for every student regardless of ethnicity, gender, diverse learning need or family income. Academic success for every Kentucky student is a basic tenet of Kentucky's education system.

Morgan Elementary (Paducah Independent Schools) is one Kentucky school proving that success is possible for all students. In spite of perceived barriers to high academic performance — 92 percent poverty rate and 47 percent minority student enrollment — Morgan's students are achieving at high levels.

With 2003 reading, science and social studies scores near 90, Morgan is well within reach of the statewide goal of 100 by 2014. Morgan outpaced many elementary schools in the state, achieving a 2003 school accountability index of 84.1; well above the state average of 72.5.

"We decided a long time ago not to accept any excuses," said Principal Stan Lafferty. "There are many reasons a teacher could pick that would allow these students to fail. The only variable teachers can control is the instruction."

Lafferty explained that the first step in ensuring success for all Morgan students was making sure everyone believed that success could be achieved. "We had to change our focus from behavior to academics," he explained.

The faculty began by re-evaluating the instructional day. Lafferty knew if the students were not getting the help they needed after school let out, then it was his responsibility to make sure they were learning the curriculum while at school.

This is why instructional time is "sacred" at Morgan Elementary. Students are involved in structured activity from the time they arrive at school until they leave. "Students need all of the instructional time they can get if they are going to master the learning objectives," he said.

Morgan's official school day is 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., but students arrive early and stay late. Special teachers for music, art, physical education and library work 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. This allows students to stay after school for arts enrichment.

Another key Lafferty credits to Morgan's success is a focused curriculum taught by an experienced staff. "We have a seasoned staff and an administrative team who have learned over the years what it takes to teach our students," he said.

Lafferty makes special efforts to ensure that all Morgan teachers are highly quali-

fied and well supported. Veteran teachers are trained to help new teachers develop the skills they need to become successful.

"Keeping teachers involves helping

Principal Vicki Conyer. Teams of teachers analyze student responses to instruction to determine if all children are learning and if proper teaching techniques are

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*At Morgan Elementary, success seems to be an ongoing, shared goal for the administration, faculty, staff, families and community members. They know that it is possible for all students to achieve, and they are seeing it happen.*

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them to be successful once they get here and finding them an active role in the program beyond the classroom," Lafferty said. "We, at Morgan, try to help our teachers develop those areas in which they excel, as well as strengthening their weaknesses."

Part of the training for all teachers involves focus groups led by Assistant

being used.

"Analyzing problems together and giving the teachers the tools and skills they need to help their students achieve has made all the difference in the world," Conyer said. "We believe we can make that positive difference in the lives of students. When we believe it, the students believe it, and they perform accordingly."



Retired Paducah physician Harry Brigance tutors 2nd grader Iuan White in reading. Brigance and other community volunteers have been trained as reading coaches to help students improve their literacy skills and to supplement classroom instruction.

In addition to the focus on analyzing student work, Morgan employs mathematics, reading, writing, and arts and humanities specialists to answer any questions that teachers have about teaching those content areas. All new teachers, regardless of grade level, are trained to score and teach writing.

Morgan also offers ongoing professional development in areas identified by the staff during their analysis of test data. "Professional development must be ongoing and personally designed for the individual so that a teacher can develop into the best professional that they can be," explained Lafferty.

Another important component of a school's success is family and community involvement. Lafferty credits the Head Start program for sparking parental connections. "We capture these parents during the early years and plug them into activities where they can help us for all the remaining years that they have students in our school," he said.

The Reading Coach program is new. It brings members of the community into the school to help primary students with reading. The coaches supplement what parents are doing at home with their children's reading as well as supplementing classroom instruction. After eight hours of training, the coaches meet with students once a week for a 16-week period.

"I have collected no data at this point to defend its academic importance. But if positive attitudes of the participants are worth anything, I would predict that it will be a tremendous success," Lafferty shared. "One thing it has done is introduce these children to successful people."

At Morgan Elementary, success seems to be an ongoing, shared goal for the administration, faculty, staff, families and community members. They know that it is possible for all students to achieve, and they are seeing it happen.

Because of the academic success Morgan Elementary has had with children from homes with limited incomes, the school has been selected as a Partnership School by the Partnership for Kentucky Schools. This organization of Kentucky business leaders is dedicated to the improvement of Kentucky schools through community involvement. Over a two-year period, the Partnership Schools Initiative will invest \$50,000 and technical and program assistance in each school to accelerate student achievement.

"We still have a lot of work to do if all of our students are going to be able to compete with their peers across the state," said Lafferty. "They are doing much better than most students who come from their socioeconomic group, but our goal is that they can rise above it as adults."

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# T.C. CHERRY

from Page 1

of Education Rod Paige in a prepared statement.

The NCLB Blue Ribbon School selection was based on either of two assessment criteria:

- Schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that dramatically improve student performance to a high level on state assessment

- Schools whose students, regardless of background, achieve in the top 10 percent on state tests

T.C. Cherry met both criteria. The school has excelled in many ways, overcoming many obstacles.

For example, nearly 58 percent of the school's students participate in the free- and reduced-price lunch program. Ten percent of the students come from minority backgrounds. For many, English is a second language. Seven different languages are spoken at the school.

The school's academic index for spring 2003 is 98.7 points, well surpassing its goal of 75.3 on the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS). T.C. Cherry is one of a number of schools that are closing in on Kentucky's goal of 100 points, or proficiency, by 2014.

This high academic achievement is the result of teamwork on the part of students, principal, teachers, staff, parents and community leaders. "Everybody is focused and consistent. It definitely is a team effort," said Vivian Baker, a primary teacher.

"I believe it is the culture of the school that does more than anything. Expectations are high for everyone," said Principal Susan McCloud. "Everyone

works hard to create an environment, a climate where learning can occur."

"Of course, it didn't happen overnight. It has been a six-year process. We needed to get everyone at the school on the same page. We started with teaching student behaviors and developing consistent messages across the board. Then we could focus on core content, and learning could occur," said McCloud.

"Everyone — students and teachers — is very dedicated and works well together," said primary teacher Jenny Huskey. "The students feel a sense of pride and realize that their efforts have made them successful," said Huskey.

Jane Coverdale, media specialist, believes that everything at the school connects. By communicating and collaborating frequently, the entire faculty stays connected to what is going on in the classrooms. "When students are studying about a particular subject, I select appropriate books and materials to connect with the classroom," said Coverdale.

Mentoring programs and early intervention with reading and mathematics have helped the school excel. McCloud said teachers using these strategies are closing the gaps between the academic performances of boys and girls and pupils from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

The goal of NCLB Blue Ribbon School is to promote and support the improvement of education in America. Since 1982, the U.S. Education Department has awarded Blue Ribbon status to 42 Kentucky public schools and 11 parochial schools.



Photo by Rick McComb

T.C. Cherry primary student Christiana Boyer makes an entry in her writing journal.

# STATE

from Page 1

vending machines, school food service programs, student physical activity and surveys of students' health habits and behaviors.

During its review of items relating to the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS), the board:

- heard information about a schedule to talk about improvements to the system

- received information about the Learning Compact (transition point assessments; early diagnostic tools and interventions; increased parent and student responsibility; and intensive reading and mathematics initiatives)

- discussed augmented assessments for grades 3-8, longitudinal assessments and national norms

The board also heard reports and discussed the following items:

- information from the Kentucky School for the Blind and Kentucky School for the Deaf stakeholder committees

- future amendments to the Kentucky School Facilities Planning Manual, 720 KAR 1:001

- current status of the Differenti-

ated Compensation Pilot Program

- an update on deficit and watch list school districts

- designation of an agent to manage high school interscholastic athletics

- classroom applications of technology

- Reading First, Read to Achieve and other reading and mathematics initiatives

- programs to support teachers, schools and districts in improving assessment and instructional practice

- instructional leadership
- allocations of state and federal funding

- 2004 elementary and secondary education legislation

- the biennial budget

The board took the following actions:

- approved a motion to issue a statement supporting state education funding

- accepted the Statement of Consideration from a public hearing on regulations related to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act requirements

- approved 2003-04 local district tax rates levied

- approved district facility plans for Boone, Crittenden, Laurel and Lawrence counties

- agreed work with the state Auditor of Public Accounts to provide audit services for the department in lieu of hiring a full-time internal auditor

- agreed to repeal 704 KAR 3:401, the Principal Assessment Center regulation

- directed staff to provide more information on and place on an upcoming

agenda as a full board item 702 KAR 7:125, the pupil attendance regulation

- approved a motion to make technical changes to regulations regarding the definitions of school classifications

The next meeting of the Kentucky Board of Education will be April 7 and 8 in Frankfort. More information about the state board and its meetings can be found at [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov), then enter "KBE" in the keyword/search box and click.



## Inside Kentucky Schools

*A Kentucky Department of Education production*

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# DISTRICT

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Neither district was disappointed in the audit findings. While both were doing good things in many areas, the districts also learned they had areas that needed more attention. A beneficial part of the district level audit process was the strategies recommended to help the district address those areas of need, Puckett said.

The audit in Breckinridge County pointed out the need for better communications with stakeholders and the need to eliminate barriers for students at key transition points in their education. Puckett said his district is now in the process of developing and implementing a comprehensive public relations program to better communicate with parents and the community about what's happening in district schools.

A newly formed transition committee is looking at the problems the district's students are having moving from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school. The committee will develop exit criteria at each transition point as well as review and revise the district's curriculum alignment, Puckett explained.

In Fayette County, the audit pointed out the need to examine how the district planned for school and student success, Stone said. This school year, the district is looking more closely at its implementation and impact checks. "We're a lot more

focused in our planning work," Stone said. "At the district level and the school level, we're focused on the nine standards."

Fayette County also is working on its curriculum mapping. The audit recommended that the current K-8 map be expanded to high school. The district has decided to include preschool through high school as well as look at vertical alignment within schools and across the feeder school patterns, Stone said.

Local school boards and district staffs have a vital and pivotal role to play in assisting and supporting all schools and students to achieve at high levels, said Hurt, who is guiding the Department of Education's school improvement initiatives. School boards and district office staff are needed to provide the leadership to focus every educator in the district on improving instruction, increasing student learning, making data-informed decisions about teaching and learning, and remaining committed to sustaining reform, she added.

The five voluntary audits underscored the need for district support in these areas:

- Instituting a district-wide tradition of excellence with high expectations for students and teachers
- Ensuring a district-wide curriculum that connects to state and national standards and provides teachers with clear expectations of what to teach
- Ensuring tight connections between

school- and district-level planning that uses comprehensive planning and the "Standards and Indicators for School Improvement" as tools for school and district self study

- Expanding instructional leadership among all stakeholders
- Increasing deliberate and meaningful communication between all stakeholders
- Basing decision making on data and high-quality research
- Providing job-embedded professional development that improves instruction and ensures professional growth
- Establishing strong family/community/school partnerships that create a safe learning environment
- Looking beyond the district and "outside the box" to make improvements that impact instruction and learning

"The result of the Fayette County audit was more information for us to improve our work," said Stone. "The nine standards and indicators for school improvement are a very comprehensive framework for improvement."

To learn more about the district audit process and the Standards and Indicators for School Improvement for districts, go to the department's Web site at [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov) and click on "School Improvement" in the left-hand menu.

## Facts and figures tell about education in Kentucky

The Kentucky Department of Education is the source for a variety of facts and figures about education in Kentucky. Some are little-known, others — like the number of public school districts (176) — are repeatedly referenced.

Here are some facts and figures about education in Kentucky. All information was gathered for the 2002-2003 school year unless otherwise noted.

Kentucky has 1,265 public schools. There are 781 elementary schools, 216 middle schools and 233 high schools. Three schools serve students from entering primary through 12th grade. There are 31 preschools and one 9th-grade school.

A total of 650,227 students attend public schools. Nearly 14 percent of the students are minorities.

It takes a lot of people to operate those schools. Kentucky employed 41,009 teachers in the 2001-2002 school year. For the same year, 8,051 certified staff members served in schools and districts:

- 538 instructional coordinators/supervisors
- 1,479 guidance counselors
- 1,231 library media specialists
- 2,003 school administrators
- 1,105 student support services
- 110 other support services
- 1,285 district administrators
- 300 district support services

Money for schools comes from three basic sources:

- \$ 3.155 billion from state sources in 2004
- \$ 1.464 billion from local sources
- \$499 million from federal sources

The Kentucky school year is 185 days long. This includes four days of professional development and two planning days for teachers and four holidays. Most school districts operate on the same school calendar. However, 32 districts have alternative calendars, and individual schools within Fayette and Jefferson counties and Ashland Independent districts have alternative calendars.

School districts employ 11,578 full-time, licensed bus drivers. There are 9,537 school buses.

For more facts and figures about Kentucky schools and districts, go to the department's Web site at [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov), click on News Room in the left-hand menu and scroll to "Facts about Kentucky's Education Community."



Photo by Rick McComb

### Searching for an answer

Coty Stiltner and Enrico Shaw, students at Stonewall Elementary in Fayette County, carefully read the front-page stories in the local newspaper to find answers for a scavenger hunt as part of the Newspapers in Education program.



# Leadership Letter

Compiled by Joy Barr, [jbarr@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:jbarr@kde.state.ky.us)

## ‘Quality Counts’ rates states, looks at special education

Kentucky is listed as one of eight states earning an A for the standards and accountability components of its state testing system in “Quality Counts 2004,” an annual study of education in this country conducted by “Education Week.” Kentucky’s school-testing program received the high mark for quality and effectiveness. The report also commended Kentucky’s use of open-response questions and its testing at all grade levels in all subjects.

Kentucky was recognized for its efforts in improving teacher quality through testing and teacher preparation. However, the state received only passing grades for its financial commitment to education and for school climate, in part because of low parent involvement.

In another portion of the special publication, the report looks at how states are struggling to meet federal requirements on academic proficiency for students with disabilities. “Quality Counts 2004:

Count Me In: Special Education in an Era of Standards” provides a state-by-state report card that examines what states are doing to test special education students, hold schools accountable for their performance, prepare teachers to educate these students and pay for special education services.

The report found that, in general, the percentage of special education students performing at the proficient level or higher on state tests lagged 30 percentage points or more behind general education students — an important gap in light of the performance goals of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Each year, “Quality Counts” charts progress of states’ education systems in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and grades them in four areas: standards and accountability, efforts to improve teacher quality, school climate and resources.

The report is available at [www.edweek.org/sreports/](http://www.edweek.org/sreports/).

## KDE releases test items

The Kentucky Department of Education has released new test items from the 2003 Kentucky Core Content Tests. These items are representative of questions that students will see when testing begins in April.

Each item is accompanied by the academic expectations and core content addressed by the items and correct answers. Information is included on how students performed on the items during the spring 2003 assessment: percentage of students who answered the multiple-choice items correctly and percentage of students receiving points (Blank, 0, 1, 2, 3 and

4) on the open-response questions.

Each content area and grade level has a set of multiple-choice questions and open-response items. Not all sub-domain areas will have released items.

Later this year, the department will release sample student responses annotated to the scoring guide and instructional connections to help enhance teaching and learning in Kentucky.

To see the released items, go to [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov) and enter “released items” in the keyword/search box and click.

## 75 schools receive reading grants

The U.S. Department of Education has identified 75 Kentucky schools that will share \$89 million in funds to implement the Reading First program over the next six years. Schools will receive grants of between \$130,000 and \$170,000 per year to implement research-based reading programs.

Reading First is a component of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The initiative is designed to improve the reading levels of primary students. Statewide professional development will focus on the five essential components of effective reading instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocab-

ulary development, fluency and comprehension), as well as scientifically based reading research, programs and assessments.

Each eligible district had to meet strict federal criteria. Schools also became eligible if they had greater than 50 percent of their students reading below proficient as measured on the Kentucky Core Content Tests. To view the listing of schools receiving funding visit the Kentucky Department of Education’s Web site at [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov), enter “Reading First” in the keyword/search box and click.



Photo by Rick McComb

### *Observing education in Kentucky*

U.S. Education Secretary Rod Paige looks over the shoulder of Goldsmith Elementary School upper primary student Zachery Green as he completes a computer search for information. Paige visited the Jefferson County school and spoke with state and community leaders during a visit to Kentucky in early February.

## Fitness guidelines issued for children, new resources available for schools

The National Association for Sports and Physical Education (NASPE) has issued new fitness guidelines for children 5 to 12 years of age, based on recent childhood obesity findings. The organization recommends that children have at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily.

The guidelines also recommend that children participate each day in a variety of age-appropriate physical activities designed to achieve optimal health, wellness, fitness and performance benefits. For more information about the NASPE fitness guidelines, visit [www.naspeinfo.org](http://www.naspeinfo.org).

In December, the Kentucky Board of Education passed a resolution emphasizing the importance of physical activity

for students and encouraging Kentucky educators to look for ways to integrate physical activity in their daily classroom schedules.

To help teachers find classroom resources, the Kentucky Department of Education has posted links from its Web site to programs and activities that combine academic achievement in one or more content areas with improved health and physical education knowledge and skills. Each resource addresses national and Kentucky health and physical education standards.

Links to these resources can be found at [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov), by typing “physical activity” in the keyword/search box and clicking.





Photo by Rick McComb

Teacher Amy Longwill helps junior Daymon Smith fill a dish with lasagna during a cooking class at The Providence School. Students prepared a meal and sold plate lunches to fund future cooking lessons.

## Jessamine teacher helps students look beyond 'these four walls'

By Joy Barr

jbarr@kde.state.ky.us

"To find a dream and a life of their own.

A place in the clouds, a foundation of stone. . ."

These words written by Susan Gibson from the song "Wide Open Spaces" exemplify efforts students and teachers at The Providence School are making. This nontraditional school in Jessamine County offers students an alternative program where they can learn academic skills as well as social, emotional and coping skills. All skills are taught as part of a meaningful, appropriate curriculum.

The Kentucky Department of Education recently recognized Amy Longwill, a teacher at the school, by naming her the Stella A. Edwards Special Education Teacher of the Year.

Longwill and teaching colleague Jennifer Cox were frustrated with the number of special education students who were dropping out during their freshman year of high school in Jessamine County.

Longwill developed a program for troubled students who are failing in school and likely to drop out. She named the dropout prevention program "Wide Open Spaces" because of "a moving statement that a student shared with Mrs. Longwill

about the difficulty of 'remaining within these four walls,'" said Matt Moore, the district's special education director.

"Wide Open Spaces" helps teachers and students "attack" the behaviors behind the indicators for dropping out: low reading levels, high absenteeism, lack of family involvement and lack of student success because of failing classes or below-grade-level academic achievement. Teachers do whatever is necessary through intensive work with each and every student to keep them in school.

"There's a lot more going on with these kids than just one or two issues," said Longwill. "Their reading levels are significantly below grade level. They have poor attendance. They have behavioral and developmental problems and disabilities."

In its short existence, the program has prevented a number of students from dropping out of high school. In turn, these students now have more "tools" for success in life after school, she said.

Longwill never hesitates to give credit to Cox, her teaching colleague, and her instructional assistant, Tammy Baker, for the program's accomplishments. They collaborate often to "think out of the box" and find ways to make students succeed and feel success.

Longwill allows students to monitor their own progress. This enables them to identify their needs for improvement and their successes, she explained.

"The students need to celebrate their successes — regardless of how small or large. Every effort is made to ensure success," said Longwill. Teachers recognize students for improvement, attendance, strides in conflict resolution, accepting responsibility for behavior and passing all attempted classes.

"Students must be encouraged and motivated to understand how important it is to get a high school diploma," said Longwill.

Relationships with the students' families are a key component of the program. Longwill visits the students' homes regularly, not just when they are absent from class. She believes this has encouraged better atten-

dance and increased parent support. The students believe their teachers want and need them in school, she said.

New students at The Providence School must pass a four-week Discovery program before beginning any academic work. The course teaches students and staff about treating one another with dignity and respect. They learn how to work with conflict, anger and other relational skills.

As part of Discovery, they learn the six Ps — be prompt, be prepared, be polite, have a positive mental attitude, participate and produce. Those skills are then implemented in every class.

One of the elective classes that Longwill teaches is cooking. While preparing meals, students also learn spelling, vocabulary, writing skills, mathematics,

following directions and teamwork. Teachers at The Providence School provide instruction in all areas of life to help their students become productive, responsible citizens.

Contact: Amy Longwill at The Providence School, (859) 887-4600; alongwill@jessamine.k12.ky.us

### About the award

The Kentucky Department of Education presents the annual Stella A. Edwards Special Education Teacher of the Year award to recognize innovative teaching practices and dedication to children with special needs. For details, contact Denise Bailey, (502) 564-4970 or dbailey@kde.state.ky.us.



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